CLAIMS

1. A distributed streaming media server system, comprising:

a plurality of streaming media servers that each store a selection of multimedia files;

a master streaming media server communicatively coupled to the plurality of streaming media servers and that compiles mapping information regarding a location of each of the multimedia files that are stored on each of the plurality of streaming media servers; and

at least one streaming media client that requests access to a multimedia file through the master streaming media server and receives setup information regarding the requested multimedia file such that the at least one streaming media client may directly access the multimedia file from one of the plurality of streaming media servers.

2. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the multimedia files of the distributed streaming media server system comprise video files.

3. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the at least one streaming media client receives the setup information from the master streaming media server.

4. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the at least one streaming media client receives the setup information from one of the plurality of streaming media servers.

5. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the request for access to the multimedia file by the at least one streaming media client is multiplexed.

6. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the master streaming media server considers load balancing when determining which of the plurality of streaming media servers is selected for access by the at least one streaming media client.

7. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the master streaming media server includes a socket thread, a request queue, and request threads to initiate transmission of information between the at least one streaming media client and the plurality of streaming media servers.

8. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the master streaming media server includes a load poll thread, a load average queue, and load average threads to determine the load balancing among the plurality of streaming media servers.

9. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the master streaming media server selects one of the plurality of streaming media servers to access for the requested multimedia file and redirects the requesting client to exchange information directly with the one of the plurality of streaming media servers.

10. The distributed streaming media server system of claim 1 wherein the master streaming media server utilizes a logical content database that is queried by the master streaming media server to identify which of the plurality of streaming media servers possesses a specific streaming media file that fulfills a request for the specific streaming media file originating from the at least one streaming media client.

11. The distributed streaming media server system as set forth in claim 1 wherein the at least one streaming media client, the master streaming media server, and one of the plurality of streaming media servers utilize a connectionless and stateless communications

protocol between the at least one streaming media client and the master streaming media server, between the master streaming media server and the one of the plurality of streaming media servers, and between the one of the plurality of the streaming media servers and the at least one streaming media client.

12. The distributed streaming media server system as set forth in claim 11 wherein the connectionless and stateless communications protocol is integrated directly into the master streaming media server, the one of the plurality of streaming media servers, and the at least one streaming media client.

13. A method by which a distributed streaming media server system having a plurality of streaming media servers, a master streaming media server, and at least one streaming media client provides a media presentation to a user, comprising:

receiving a user request for a media file at the at least one streaming media client;

forwarding the user request to the master streaming media server;

analyzing the user request with the master streaming media server to determine which of the plurality of streaming media servers is appropriate for sending the media file of the user request;

establishing a streaming media connection between the at least one server media client and one of the plurality of streaming media servers; and

initiating transmission of a media stream that includes the media file from the one of the plurality of streaming media servers to the at least one streaming media client.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the analyzing the user request comprises scanning a table to determine which of the plurality of streaming media servers contains the requested media file.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising contacting one of the streaming media servers to determine its operational status.

16. The method of claim 14 further comprising examining bandwidth history of the plurality of streaming media servers.

17. The method of claim 14 wherein the analyzing the user request comprises determining which of the plurality of streaming media servers are equipped to fulfill the request for the media file.

18. The method of claim 13 wherein the establishing the streaming media connection comprises passing a redirect to the at least one streaming media client.

19. A network system for accessing selected streaming video files comprising:

a network having a master streaming video server communicatively coupled to a plurality of streaming video servers, the plurality of streaming video servers each storing at least one video file that is configured to operate as a streaming video file;

a processor communicatively coupled to the network that receives instructions from a user to access a particular video file and passes the instructions to the master streaming video server for analysis;

the master streaming video server being configured to determine which, if any, of the plurality of streaming video servers stores the particular video file.

20. The network system of claim 19 wherein the master streaming video server further comprises load balancing capabilities to select one of the plurality of streaming video servers having a preferred bandwidth to stream the particular video file.

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